

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00

SAM-01 SAJ-01 PRS-01 SP-02 RSC-01 L-01 /040 W

----- 086354

R 171228Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2772

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 9951

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, PFOR, PO, US, BE

SUBJECT: US POLICY AND ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGAL

REF: STATE 274670

SUMMARY. BELGIAN GOVERNMENT GIVEN COPY OF US/PORTUGUESE STATEMENT (REFTEL) AND DELIGHTED WITH WHAT IT SEES AS SHIFT IN US POLICY TO PORTUGAL TO A MORE FLEXIBLE AND FORTHCOMING POSITION.

1. TEXT OF US/PORTUGUESE STATEMENT DELIVERED TO FOREIGN MINISTRY DECEMBER 16 AS REQUESTED REFTTEL.

2. CHIEF OF WESTERN AFFAIRS SECTION OF FOREIGN MINISTEY (LEON RONSE) HAS PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED MEETING WITH US TO DISCUSS PORTUGAL AT REQUEST OF HEAD OF POLITICAL DIRECTORATE (ETIEENNE DAVIGNON). RONSE TOLD US THAT BELGIAN GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN CONCERNED THAT US AND BELGIAN VIEW OF EVENTS AND POLICY VIS A VIS PORTUGAL WERE DIVERGING, AND THAT HE HAD PLANNED TO SUGGEST THAT NOW WAS THE TIME TO BRING ALL ASSISTANCE WE
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COULD TO PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO INFLUENCE EVENTS AND

PERSONS WHILE THEY WERE STILL EVOLVING. HE WAS DELIGHTED TO READ US/PORTUGUESE STATEMENT AND SAID HE DREW THE CONCLUSION THAT NEWSPAPER REPORTS OF THE US TAKING A HARD LINE TOWARDS PORTUGAL, BECAUSE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT INCLUDED A COMMUNIST MINISTER, WERE NOT BORNE OUT BY FACTS OF US POLICY.

3. RONSE THEN ASKED WHETHER USG HAD AN OVERALL POLICY TOWARDS EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WHICH WERE EMERGING FROM FASCIST RULE. WE REPLIED THAT US TENDED TO APPROACH SUBJECT ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS. RONSE SAID THAT ALL THE REPORTS BELGIAN GOVERNMENT HAD ON SPAIN INDICATED THAT SITUATION THERE WAS EVOLVING TOWARDS A DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT. FRANCO COULD STILL INFLUENCE THE TIMETABLE, BUT COULD NO LONGER STOP THIS PROGRESS. HE SUGGESTED THAT US GOVERNMENT WOULD SOONER OR LATER FACE POLICY DECISIONS TO REGARDS TO SPAIN SIMILAR TO THOSE IT HAD JUST FACED IN PORTUGAL.

4. RONSE, INTERPRETING BELGIAN GOVERNMENT POSITION, NOTED THAT UNDEMOCRATIC REGIMES IN WESTERN EUROPE WERE AN EMBARRASSMENT. ONCE FASCIST REGIMES WERE A THING OF THE PAST, EUROPE AND THE NORTH ATLANTIC COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRATIC, INDUSTRIALIZED STATES WOULD BE IN A FAR BETTER POSITION FROM WHICH TO DEAL WITH THE COMMUNIST STATES. HE NOTED THE DANGERS INHERENT OF A SWING FROM FASCISM TO COMMUNISM IN THESE STATES, BUT THOUGHT THIS WAS CONTROLLABLE WITH WESTERN GUIDANCE, ASSISTANCE AND LINKS.

5. WE ASKED RONSE WHAT BELGIAN GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO DO TO ASSIST NEW PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT UNFORTUNATELY THERE WAS LITTLE BELGIUM COULD DO BILATERALLY IN THE ABSENCE OF FRESH FUNDS (WHICH BELGIAN GOVERNMENT APPARENTLY DOES NOT INTEND TO REQUEST). HE SAID THAT BELGIUM WOULD DO ALL IT COULD IN EC-9 CONTEXT TO FACILITATE PORTUGAL'S INTEGRATION INTO WESTERN EUROPE, SPECIFICALLY CITING TOMATO PASTE PROBLEM WHICH HE SAID LOOMS LARGE IN PORTUGUESE EYES AND SMALL IN THE EUROPEAN (I.E. BELGIAN) SCHEME OF THINGS. ADDITIONALLY, RONSE THOUGHT BELGIUM COULD SHOW DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS IN PORTUGUESE LABOR MOVEMENT HOW A FUNCTIONNING SYSTEM OF LABOR/ MANAGEMENT RELATIONS OPERATED USING BELGIUM AS THE EXAMPLE AND THE FGTB AS THE MEANS. HE SAID THAT THIS IDEA WAS STILL IN THE NASCENT STATE OF DEVELOPMENT. FIRESTONE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BRUSSE09951
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740366-0976
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741230/aaaaazna.tel
Line Count: 107
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 74 STATE 274670
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 APR 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <25 MAR 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US POLICY AND ASSISTANCE TO PORTUGAL
TAGS: EAID, PFOR, PO, US, BE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005